

The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

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THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN DELAYED IN ORDER TO CARRY NEWS OF THE FINAL PLANS FOR A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY IN NEW YORK CITY THIS WINTER. SUCH A MEETING HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR ALL MEMBERS AND FOR OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS. ESPECIALLY THOSE ATTENDING THE CONVENTION OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA.

Actually there are two meetings of the society on our schedule, and both are open to guests as well as members. The first will be held at the *American Museum of Natural History* (Central Park West at 79th Street) on Tuesday morning, December 28, at 10 o'clock. The room number is 426. Notice that this represents a change of meeting place. The official program of the M.L.A. carries the announcement that we are to meet in the New York Public Library, but we meet at the American Museum of Natural History instead.

The program for this meeting will center around Melville's life in the Marquesas Islands. Wilson Heflin (U.S. Naval Academy), who is preparing a detailed study of Melville's roving in the Pacific, will provide a general orientation with maps and will summarize recent interesting discoveries in this field of scholarship. The main speaker will be Dr. H. L. Shapiro, chairman of the department of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History. A distinguished scholar of primitive life in the Pacific, Dr. Shapiro is the author of a technical study of Japanese immigration into Hawaii and also of many articles. In *The Heritage of the Bounty* he described the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers on Norfolk Island. He has visited the Marquesas on two of his field trips and has explored the whole region of the Taipi Valley. Long an admirer of *Typee*, he will attempt informally to project the former life-ways of the Taipis and to present an anthropologist's point of view regarding the qualities of Melville's observations in his first novel.

The second meeting of the Society (and one to which guests are particularly invited) will be held on Tuesday evening, December 28, at 7:30 o'clock, in the Washington Room of the Hotel Statler (location of the M.L.A. convention). Robert Herridge will speak on "Producing

Moby-Dick on TV." Mr. Herridge is the producer of "Camera 3," WCBS-TV's Peabody Award-winning educational series. Beginning last October 16, "Camera 3" presented a six-weeks series of half-hour sequences based on *Moby-Dick*. By general report it proved to be a magnificent presentation. Dramatic readings were given by such fine actors as Winfield Hoeny, Hamish Cochrane, Earle Hyman, Michael Kane, and Gerald Sarracini. Mr. Herridge's remarks will be followed by a Kinescope film of the final program on the series. This film has been prepared especially for our program and at our specific request; it represents considerable effort and expense on the part of the staff of "Camera 3." A large audience will prove the effort worth-while.

In addition to the interesting items on our program which are described above, members will have the pleasure of considering and perhaps acting upon a very kind offer from the trustees of the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield to make the new Herman Melville Memorial Room there the permanent headquarters of our Society. This matter will be considered at the morning meeting, as will the election of (1) a member of the Executive Committee and (2) the secretary. Other matters of business may also be discussed.

MELVILLE EXPLICATOR

Regarding the "very curious and enigmatic, not to say grammatically elliptical, passage" in Chapter CXXI of *Moby-Dick*, mentioned by George R. Creeger in our Summer, 1954 issue, Edward H. Rosenberry suggests the possibility that, while elliptical, it may be neither erroneous nor enigmatic.

In Rosenberry's opinion, "Stubb is merely playfully equating Flask with Aquarius as the water runs off him in the storm. Calling Flask a water-bearer is a standard Melvillian pun. All that is needed to make perfect grammatical sense is the omitted subject in the last part of the sentence: '[one] might fill pitchers at your coat collar.' Such an ellipsis can hardly be a textual problem to anyone who has ever written, 'Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here.'"

The complete original sentence, as published in all [?] editions of *Moby-Dick*: "Shake yourself; you're Aquarius, or the water-bearer. Flask; might fill pitchers at your coat collar."

NOTES

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on Sunday, August 8, broadcast over a nationwide television network a discussion of *Moby-Dick*. The program (from Toronto) was one of its regular Sunday evening series, "Books Alive." Gordon H. Roper, as a Melville expert, participated.

Edward H. Rosenberry's book-length study of Melville's humor, *Melville and the Comic Spirit*, is being prepared for publication.

The M. M. Matthews Press of Chicago is incorporating into its revised edition of the *Dictionary of Americanisms* some of C. Merton Babcock's findings in his Melville lexicon.

Stanley T. Williams is writing the Melville chapter in the forthcoming (1955?) *Review of Research in American Literature*, sponsored by the American Literature Group.

In a review of Jay Leyda's *Melville Log*, written for the current issue of *Etudes Anglaises*, Jean Simon calls the book "le corpus, l'indispensable travail de base auquel doivent désormais se référer sans cesse les melvilliens, s'ils veulent éviter l'affirmation gratuite et l'intuition démentie par les faits."

Incredible as it may seem, the paper presented by Howard E. Sylvester of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology ("'And I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee': Three Analogues of the Book of Job") at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association meeting (Greeley, Colo., October 23) had nothing at all to do with Melville.

The shortest and probably the most inaccurate of all versions of *Moby-Dick* appeared this autumn in the syndicated comic strip, "Dickie Dare," drawn by Coulton Waugh.

The Confidence Man, edited by Elizabeth S. Foster, was published by Hendricks House early in September (exact date not reported). \$3.50.

In *Of Whales and Men* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), R. B. Robertson refers rather skeptically to the whaling lore in Melville's masterpiece (which

he calls *Maybe Dick*) and explains that "no whaleman author ever has told the exact truth since Herman Melville set the standard of whaling mendacity."

MOTION PICTURE NEWS

The new John Huston production of *Moby-Dick* bids fair to be the best publicized motion picture since *Gone with the Wind*. Comments and photographs have been appearing in magazines and newspapers throughout the English-speaking world. On Sunday, November 21, Ed Sullivan interviewed Huston and Gregory Peck (Captain Ahab in the picture) on his television program, "Toast of the Town," and the following week (November 28) Sullivan showed one scene from the film itself.

The picture is being spoken of as "the real Melville" on the basis of Huston's repeated comment to the effect that he is trying to produce a film story which will be exactly like the story Melville wrote. The secretary of the Society, who has read and criticized the script, can vouch for the fact that a distinct effort in this direction has been made. Unless the script is changed, the story (with minor variations) will be the "real" Melville. Whether it will be the "complete" Melville, however, is another matter.

Incidentally, Gregory Peck stated in his television interview that, as a young man, he had played the part of Ahab in what he described as a truly splendid production of the story on the legitimate stage at the Pasadena Playhouse.

The technicians who worked in the production of Huston's picture left a spectacular menace to shipping somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean when a mechanical figure of Moby Dick himself escaped on the high seas and floated away without a trace. Days of search by airplane failed to reveal any sign of the monster. Melville readers will regard this bold bid for freedom as entirely in character for the White Whale!

For more news about this picture, see our next issue.

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Members who have not yet sent in their dues for 1954 (\$2 for active membership, \$1 for associate membership) are urged to do so before we close our books for the year.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER
IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE
Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested
in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to
facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to
stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage
literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership is
two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Asso-
ciate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes
all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at
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